

Captain Robert Blunt House
(Leonard Cotton House)
144 Washington Street
Portsmouth
Rockingham County
New Hampshire

HABS No. NH-83

HABS
NH,
8-PORT,
150-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CAPTAIN ROBERT BLUNT HOUSE
(LEONARD COTTON HOUSE)

HABS No. NH-83

Location: 144 Washington Street, Rockingham County,
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
(old numbering 24 Washington Street)

Present Owner: Mrs. Beatrice Burch.

Present Occupant: Mrs. Beatrice Burch.

Present Use: Two family dwelling.

Significance: Two-and-a-half story, hip roofed clapboarded
dwelling, typical of homes of 18th century
Portsmouth sea captains and merchants. c.1789.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Probably 1789.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

1779	March 16. William Simpson, Esq. of Oxford N.H. sold to Benjamin Bigelow, of Portsmouth, trader: " lot of land with old dwelling in street over Canoe Bridge." (Washington). Rockingham Co. Deeds. v. 113 p. 294.
1789	Benjamin Bigelow (called victualler) sold to son Benjamin this same property with 2 houses, the second house prob. the present house. Rock. Co. Deeds. v. 123 p. 176..
1799	Jan. 7. Benjamin Bigelow, jr. sold to Capt. Robert Blunt. Rock. Co. Deeds. v. 149, p. 117.
1826	Est. of Robert Blunt sold to Leonard Cotton. Rock. Co. Deeds. v. 246. p. 442.

Leonard Cotton lived in the house for 46 years, until his death in 1872.

The property is referred to as the Fernald Estate on a map of Portsmouth, in New Hampshire Town and City Atlas, by D. H. Hurd & Co. of Boston. 1892. p. 154.

Charles W. Taylor, plumber, lived here from 1908-1923, his widow Eva Taylor, later Mrs. Darrall Lee, stayed until 1941, when Frank Burch bought the house.

The present owner, Mrs. Beatrice Burch has lived in this house for a quarter of a century.

4. Builder, suppliers: Probably Benjamin Bigelow, Sr., who bought the property with an old dwelling on it, and sold it to his son with two houses on the land.
5. Original plans and construction: None extant.
6. Alterations and additions: It appears to be in its original state.

B. Historical Context:

Captain Robert Blunt was a noted sea captain; commanded the Schooner JAMES of Portsmouth. He was shipwrecked in the West Indies and died in the City of San Domingo, June 27, 1825. He married in 1792, Miss Elizabeth Sherburne, daughter of one of Portsmouth's leading families, and moved into this house about 7 years after his marriage.

Leonard Cotton was a cooper by trade, son of Henry Elkins Cotton, a noted housewright. He traded with the West Indies and became an affluent merchant. Married Martha Clarkson, whom he met in the West Indies, and brought her to this house in 1826.

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Important old views: Clipping from Portsmouth, New Hampshire Herald. April 18, 1959.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Rockingham County Deed. At Court House in Exeter, New Hampshire.

2. Secondary and published sources:

D. H. Hurd. "New Hampshire Town and City Atlas. 1892.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Portsmouth newspaper files.

Genealogies of Cotton and Blunt families.

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